

Currently, no funding source exists to restore watershed projects, and local sponsors do not have the resources to attempt to save these dams. H.R. 728 establishes financial assistance for the assessment and rehabilitation of small watershed dams over the next ten years. With federal cost sharing, local sponsors will now have the opportunity to repair these crucial watersheds.

The necessity of federal attention to this problem is critical, and I thank my friend and Oklahoma colleague Mr. LUCAS for his leadership of this matter and his support and commitment to the restoration of these structures. I call upon my colleagues to recognize the importance of this legislation with their support of H.R. 728.

Mr. LUCAS of Oklahoma. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MILLER of Florida). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. LUCAS) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 728, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

The title of the bill was amended so as to read:

"A bill to amend the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act to authorize the Secretary of Agriculture to provide cost share assistance for the rehabilitation of structural measures constructed as part of water resource projects previously funded by the Secretary under such Act or related laws, and for other purposes."

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. LUCAS of Oklahoma. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on H.R. 728, the bill just adopted.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Oklahoma?

There was no objection.

CONGRATULATING REPUBLIC OF LATVIA ON 10TH ANNIVERSARY OF REESTABLISHMENT OF INDEPENDENCE FROM FORMER SOVIET UNION

Mr. BEREUTER. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 319) congratulating the Republic of Latvia on the 10th anniversary of the reestablishment of its independence from the rule of the former Soviet Union.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. CON. RES. 319

Whereas the United States had never recognized the forcible incorporation of the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania into the former Soviet Union;

Whereas the declaration on May 4, 1990, of the reestablishment of full sovereignty and independence of the Republic of Latvia furthered the disintegration of the former Soviet Union;

Whereas Latvia since then has successfully built democracy, passed legislation on human and minority rights that conform to European and international norms, ensured the rule of law, developed a free market economy, and consistently pursued a course of integration into the community of free and democratic nations by seeking membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO); and

Whereas Latvia, as a result of the progress of its political and economic reforms, has made, and continues to make, a significant contribution toward the maintenance of international peace and stability by, among other actions, its participation in NATO-led peacekeeping operations in Bosnia and Kosovo: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That the Congress—

(1) congratulates Latvia on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the reestablishment of its independence and the role it played in the disintegration of the former Soviet Union; and

(2) commends Latvia for its success in implementing political and economic reforms, which may further speed the process of that country's integration into European and Western institutions.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. BEREUTER) and the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. BEREUTER).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BEREUTER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on H. Con. Res. 319.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Nebraska?

There was no objection.

Mr. BEREUTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

(Mr. BEREUTER asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks, and include extraneous material.)

Mr. BEREUTER. Mr. Speaker, this Member rises in very strong support for H. Con. Res. 319, a resolution congratulating the Republic of Latvia on the 10th anniversary of the reestablishment of its independence from the former Soviet Union. This Member is pleased to be a cosponsor of this important statement of support.

Mr. Speaker, the Baltic States of Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia had been prosperous and progressive independent nations, a set of three nations, prior to the infamous Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, an agreement that heralded 5 decades of repression.

The United States, of course, never recognized this unlawful act of international aggression. By 1990, the Soviet terror machine no longer held sway, and the long-standing courage and determination of the Latvian people was finally rewarded with freedom. Again, it was the United States that was among the first to recognize their independence when they broke free.

No one could have predicted the rapid reintegration with the West. Free elec-

tions have now become the norm, and the Saeima acts as a fully-functioning parliament. Inflation has been reduced, and Latvia has made major strides in privatization.

While the export market to Russia has collapsed, important new trading partnerships have been found in Poland, Germany and the West. Much remains to be done, but Latvians and Latvian-Americans can take justifiable pride at what has thus far been accomplished in Latvia.

For our part, the United States continues to work for the Baltic nations to deepen and broaden our relationship. As but one example, NATO military officers, including Americans, continue to work with the Latvian military directly and through NATO's Partnership For Peace program.

Latvia-Americans should also be proud of their contributions, with some retired military officers actually serving in key positions in the Latvian Armed Forces and the Ministry of Defense.

As the NATO Summit in Washington, D.C. last year concluded, Latvia joined in the Enhanced and More Operational Partnership, EMOP, a program designed to speed the day when Latvia can become a full contributing member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. The goal, which this Member strongly endorses, is to move beyond the expressions of support and facilitate the concrete steps that will result in Latvia's further integration into the West.

In other areas of cooperation, Peace Corps volunteers now teach Latvian schools and help Latvian small businessmen and women with such basic tasks as accounting and marketing. This Member is particularly pleased that the United States has created a Baltic American Enterprise Fund designed to underwrite fledgling entrepreneurs from Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia.

Finally, this Member would point out that the House of Representatives has been and is assisting the Latvian Saeima with such basic necessities as law books and computers, various kinds of library assistance.

In 1995, this Member was part of a bipartisan House task force which approved and oversaw this assistance to this parliamentary body, as we did in the other two Baltic States, and visited Latvia for that and other foreign policy security purposes. It should be noted, additionally, that such assistance most assuredly is not a hand-out. Rather, we are offering a helping hand to a nation with historically close ties to the United States. We are helping Latvians build a future where their country can continue to progress in its rightful place as a full member of the European family of democratic nations.

Mr. Speaker, this Member congratulates, in particular, the distinguished gentleman from Illinois (Mr. SHIMKUS) for crafting a resolution that merits